



## **Kentucky Adult Learner Initiative Working Group on Credit for Prior Learning**

### **Prior Learning Assessment Policy Development Worksheet**

#### **Points to consider when developing Principles and Practices for Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)**

##### **First step:**

- In addressing the following, consider involving institutional stakeholders who will be involved in the PLA process (e.g. faculty, administrators, advisors, registrar, bursar).
- Identify the steps necessary to approve and implement PLA in your institution.

##### **The context:**

- How does the institution define PLA?
- Within the mission of the institution, articulate the purpose of PLA.
- Define college-level learning.
- Identify the criteria for awarding credit for prior learning.
- Identify the specific ways to earn credit for prior learning.

##### **Applicability:**

- In which programs will students be eligible to receive PLA credit?
- Are there specific courses that are exempt from PLA?  
What is the rationale for this decision?

##### **Credit awards:**

- Is there a limit to the number of credit hours a student may earn through PLA?  
What is the rationale for this decision?
- Does the limit apply to the total number of PLA credits or only portfolio credit?
- Does PLA credit apply as residency credit?
- How will PLA credit be reflected on the transcript?

- Will PLA credit from other institutions be accepted?  
100% of the credits accepted? A limit on the number of credits accepted?  
How will this transfer of PLA credits be reflected on the transcript?

### **Assessment Criteria:**

- Will the criteria for portfolio assessment be uniform and consistent?
- How will the criteria be written?
- What are the criteria for challenge exams?  
Who will write the exams?  
How will the exams be kept secure?
- How will the criteria for all PLA opportunities be communicated to assessors, advisors, students, prospective students and (if necessary) accrediting bodies?

### **Assessment:**

- Who will assess portfolios and/or challenge exams?
- How many assessors will evaluate each portfolio/challenge exam
- How will the assessors be trained?
- How will the assessors be evaluated?
- What are the expectations and provisions for ongoing training?

### **Student Eligibility:**

- When is a student eligible for PLA credit (e.g. upon applying, upon matriculating, after/before completing a specific number of credit hours, after earning a minimum GPA, after completion of a required course)?

### **Preparing Students:**

- How will students be trained in portfolio preparation?
- Will the institution develop a course?  
Will the course be credit or non-credit?  
Which department will offer the course?  
What are the specific learning outcomes of the course?  
Who will teach this course?
- Who will advise students about PLA?  
How will the advisors be trained?

### **Financial considerations:**

- What are the fees for assessment?
- CAEL maintains that fees “should be charged independent of the assessment outcome” (Fiddler, M.). What services are provided for an assessment fee?
- Will a different fee structure apply to different types of PLA credit (e.g. CLEP, challenge exams, portfolio)?
- How will fees for PLA be assessed?  
At which point in the process?

- Where do students pay the assessment fee?
- How will assessment fees be credited within the institution?
- How will faculty assessors be paid?
- Is assessment a part of faculty load?
- Is the PLA process cost-effective for the institution?  
How does the institution address the issue of cost effectiveness?

#### **Step-by-Step:**

- Develop a flow chart of all steps in the process, including all forms of PLA
- What are the provisions for maintaining privacy?  
Is this necessary?
- What is the anticipated timeframe for portfolio preparation?
- What is the anticipated timeframe for evaluation of a portfolio after submission?
- What is the appeals process?  
Is there an additional fee for evaluation during appeal?

#### **Post-review:**

- Where will portfolios be housed post-review?  
For how long will portfolios be archived?

#### **Communication:**

- How will information about PLA be disseminated?  
To which audiences?

#### **Review of PLA:**

- What provisions are made for the review of the PLA process itself?
- What are the steps?
- Which office(s) will be charged to review the PLA process?
- What is the schedule for review and updating?

## **Additional Resources for Best Practices**

Perhaps the best source of information about “best practices” is the list of Web sites that Jerry Hickerson distributed on February 22, 2007 (“Models: What Are Other States/Provinces/Institutions Doing to Meet Goals for ‘Lifelong Learning’?”). Below are additional sites:

<http://www.cel.cmich.edu/prior-learning/plassess.html>

<http://puma.kvcc.edu/admissions/PriorLearning.htm>

<http://www.stedwards.edu/newc/portfolio/index.htm>

<http://www.pima.edu/business/training-dev/safetysservices/LearningAssessment.shtml>

By reviewing the information found at these Web sites, you will see how other institutions treat the “nuts and bolts” of prior learning. Because there is no need to re-invent the wheel, such information will help you plan your own program.